



University At Albany

**Center for
Public Health Preparedness
Grand Rounds Series**

**T2B2 and the
Center for Public Health Preparedness
present**

**Crisis and Emergency
Risk Communication**

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Viewer Call-In

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Communicating in a Crisis Is Different

- In a serious crisis, all affected people
 - Take in information differently
 - Process information differently
 - Act on information differently
- In a catastrophic event communication is different

Communicating in a Crisis Is Different

- **Be first**
- **Be right**
- **Be credible**

Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication Impacts

Five Organizational Concerns:

1. Execute response and recovery efforts
2. Decrease illness, injury, and deaths
3. Avoid misallocation of limited resources
4. Reduce rumors surrounding recovery
5. Avoid wasting resources

Individuals At Risk—The Cost?

- Demands for unneeded treatment
- Dependence on special relationships (bribery)
- MUPS—Multiple Unexplained Physical Symptoms
- Self-destructive behaviors
- Stigmatization

Community At Risk—The Cost?

- Disorganized group behavior (unreasonable demands, stealing)
- Rumors, hoaxes, fraud, stigmatization
- Trade/industry liabilities/losses
- Diplomacy
- Civil actions

What Do People Feel Inside When a Disaster Looms or Occurs?

Psychological barriers:

1. Denial
2. Fear, anxiety, confusion, dread
3. Hopelessness or helplessness
4. Seldom panic
5. Fight or flight

Risk Communication Principles for Emergencies

- Allow people the right to feel fear
 - Don't pretend they're not afraid, and don't tell them they shouldn't be.
 - Acknowledge the fear, and give contextual information.

All Risks Are Not Accepted Equally

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| • Voluntary | • Involuntary |
| • Controlled personally | • Controlled by others |
| • Familiar | • Exotic |
| • Natural | • Manmade |

All Risks Are Not Accepted Equally

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| • Reversible | • Permanent |
| • Statistical | • Anecdotal |
| • Fairly | • Unfairly distributed |
| • Affecting adults | • Affecting children |

5 Communication Failures That Undermine Operational Success

1. Mixed messages from multiple experts
2. Information released late
3. Paternalistic attitudes
4. Not countering rumors and myths in real-time
5. Public power struggles and confusion

5 Communication Steps That Boost Operational Success

1. Execute a solid communication plan
2. Be the first source for information
3. Express empathy early
4. Show competence and expertise
5. Remain honest and open

Communicating In A Crisis Is Different

- Public must feel empowered – reduce fear and victimization
- Mental preparation reduces anxiety
- Taking action reduces anxiety
- Uncertainty must be addressed

Judging The Message

- Speed counts – marker for preparedness
- Facts – consistency is vital
- Trusted source – can't fake these

5 Key Elements To Build Trust

1. Express empathy
2. Competence
3. Honesty
4. Commitment
5. Accountability

Public Information Release

- What to release
- When to release
- How to release
- Where to release
- Who to release
- Why release

Stakeholder/Partner Communication

- Stakeholders have a special connection to you and your involvement in the emergency.
- They are interested in how the incident will impact them.

Stakeholder/Partner Communication

- Partners have a working relationship to you and collaborate in an official capacity on the emergency issue or other issues.
- They are interested in fulfilling their role in the incident and staying informed.

5 Mistakes With Stakeholders

- Inadequate access
- Lack of clarity
- No energy for response
- Too little, too late
- Perception of arrogance

The STARCC Principle

Your public messages in a crisis must be:

Simple
Timely
Accurate
Relevant
Credible
Consistent

Next Steps . . .

- Meet with your partners and write a plan to communicate to the public during a crisis
 - How will we reach people with our message?
 - What is our message?
 - Does the community find us credible?
 - Acknowledge the public's right to know

Next Steps . . .

- **Be first**
- **Be right**
- **Be credible**
- Learn more about communicating in a crisis



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For More Information

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